

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

ACDA-07 IO-13 DHA-02 AID-05 /083 W

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R 080310Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9040

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2981

FOL MSG FROM SONGKHLA SENT ACTION BANGKOK IS REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA #0025

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PBOR, TH, MY

SUBJECT: THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATION ENDS

SUMMARY: THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATION IN SADA0 HAS ENDED WITH COMMANDERS CLAIMING GREAT SUCCESS IN CAPTURING AND DESTROYING A NUMBER OF ENEMY BASE CAMPS. MALAYSIANS REPORTEDLY WITHDREW VERY RELUCTANTLY AND LOOK FORWARD TO MORE JOINT VENTURES IN THAI TERRITORY. DISTRICT LEVEL RTG OFFICIALS REPORT MOVEMENT OF INSURGENTS INTO NATHAWI DISTRICT EAST OF SADA0. RTG OFFICIALS IN YALA PROVINCE ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT BE GENERATED BY JOINT OPERATIONS IN BETONG. END SUMMARY

1. THE JOINT THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATION LAUNCHED JAN. 14 HAS ENDED AMIDST SELF CONGRATULATORY STATEMENTS BY THE RESPECTIVE COMMANDERS AND DRUNKEN CELEBRATIONS BY BORDER POLICE IN SONGKHLA
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WHO HAVE RETURNED FROM THE FIELD. OPERATION WHICH LASTED THREE WEEKS ACHIEVED LIMITED OBJECTIVE OF DESTROYING SEVERAL BASE CAMPS AND AT LEAST TEMPORARILY DISRUPTING LOGISTICS SUPPORT CAPABILITY. ALTHOUGH REPORTS STATE THERE WERE ABOUT 20 "CONFIRMED" COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM) INSURGENTS KILLED, CONFIRMATION SEEMS TO BE MOSTLY SECOND OR THIRD HAND REPORTS FROM VILLAGERS.

2. DISTRICT LEVEL OFFICIALS REPORT MOVEMENT OF CPM TROOPS INTO NATHAWI DISTRICT EAST OF SADAQ. DEPUTY DISTRICT OFFICE (DDO) OF NATHAWI SAID FEB. 4 THAT VILLAGERS REPORTED INSURGENTS MOVING INTO CAMPS IN TAMBONS PA KAUP, TAB CHANG, AND PLAK NGU, OF KHAO NAM KHANG MOUNTAIN RANGE IN NATHAWI. RTG IS REPORTEDLY PLANNING OPERATION IN THIS AREA IN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT INSURGENTS FROM REGROUPING. DDO ALSO SAID THAT DURING THE PAST WEEK INSURGENTS HAD BEEN OBSERVED CROSSING THE KLONG NGAE-NATHAWI HIGHWAY AT KILOMETER 15 DURING EVENING HOURS. HE ADVISED AGAINST TRAVEL ALONG THIS ROAD ESPECIALLY AFTER DARK.

3. ONE INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE OPERATION IS THAT THE LARGEST BASE CAMP TAKEN IN SADAQ WAS APPARENTLY A COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND (CPT) CAMP RATHER THAN CPM. CAPTURED DOCUMENTS REPORTEDLY INDICATE GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN CPT AND CPM IN SADAQ THAN WAS BELIEVED TO EXIST.

4. LOCAL THAI OFFICIALS DO NOT CONFIRM EARLIER REPORTS BY MALAYSIANS THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF THAI STUDENTS OPERATING WITH CPM IN SADAQ WERE ARRESTED IN PADANG BESAR. CHIEF OF IMMIGRATION IN PADANG BESAR SAID FEB. 5 THAT HE HAD NOT HEARD OF ANY THAI STUDENTS BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THERE.

5. DESPITE IMPROVED COOPERATION AND PROSPECT OF NEW BORDER AGREEMENT, MANY LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE RESERVED IN THEIR ENTHUSIASM FOR MORE JOINT OPERATIONS. DURING RECENT TRIP TO YALA PROVINCE, BOTH POLICE OFFICERS AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR EXPRESSED CONCERN LEST RTG BE CARRIED AWAY BY THE "SPIRIT OF SADAQ." YALA GOVERNOR MONTRI TRA-NGAN SAID EFFECTIVE OPERATION IN BETONG WOULD BE FAR CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE PROBLEMATIC THAN IN SADAQ. HE THOUGHT ANY SUCH VENTURE WOULD HAVE TO LAST AT LEAST THREE MONTHS AND THAT MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT WOULD BE SYSTEMATIC SEPARATION OF INSURGENTS FROM VILLAGE SUPPORTERS. IN BETONG, HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD INVOLVE TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THOUSANDS OF VILLAGERS OUT OF POTENTIAL BATTLE AREAS. PROSPECT OF DE FACTO CHINESE REFUGEES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT YALA WAS CLEARLY UNSETTLING TO THE GOVERNOR ESPECIALLY SINCE EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE SUGGESTS MONEY TO CARE FOR THEM MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE ON TIMELY BASIS IF AT ALL.

6. DEPUTY YALA POLICE CHIEF LT. COL. SOMSAK APITCHAREE AGREED THAT HASTILY DRAWN UP OPERATION IN BETONG COULD BE A DISASTER. HE ALSO RAISED MORE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTION ASSERTING THAT BANDITS AND SEPARATISTS IN YALA WERE GREATER THREAT TO RTG THAN IS CPM, AND SAID THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN STIRRING UP HORNETS NEST BY TAKING ON CPM IN BETONG.

7. COMMENT: IMPETUS FOR JOINT OPERATION LAUNCHED IN SADAQ CAN BE ATTRIBUTED LARGELY TO RTG NEED TO REACT TO INCREASED INSURGENT

ACTIVITY IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR AND DESIRE TO
IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIANS THROUGH GREATER COOPERATION
AGAINST CPM IN BORDER AREAS. HAVING ACHIEVED SOME SUCCESS, IT
NOW APPEARS PRESSURES ARE BUILDING FOR EXPANDED BORDER OPERATIONS
WHICH MAY BE DIFFICULT TO RESIST. LOCAL THAI COMMANDERS SAY
THEY HAVE BEEN UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM THEIR MALAYSIAN COUNTER-
PARTS TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING. IRONICALLY, WHILE BORDER
AGREEMENTS ARE USUALLY ENTERED INTO TO FACILITATE JOINT BORDER
OPERATIONS, THAI MAY WELL HAVE ENTERED INTO THE SADAO OPERATION
TO FACILITATE THE SIGNING OF A BORDER AGREEMENT. NOW THAT THIS
APPEARS IMMINENT, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW RTG ATTEMPTS
TO NURTURE IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIANS WITHOUT AT THE SAME
TIME BITING OFF MORE THAN THEY CAN CHEW ALONG THE BORDER.
HAMILTON

UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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